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SUBJECT: CASABLANCA COMMEMORATES THIRD YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF  
MAY 16, TERRORIST BOMBINGS

¶1. This cable is sensitive but unclassified, please protect accordingly.

¶2. (U) Summary: On May 16 2006, the city of Casablanca peacefully commemorated those who fell to terrorism three years ago when 12 suicide bombers struck five sites around the city. Government officials, civil society leaders, family members of those killed, and survivors of the attacks gathered before a memorial erected to honor the victims. The GOM used the occasion to present financial compensation checks to 11 victims who survived the attacks and government and political party officials took the opportunity to call for a unified front in the fight against terrorism. End Summary.

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United for Peace  
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¶3. (U) On the third anniversary of the May 16, 2003, terrorist bombings at five location throughout Casablanca, hundreds of people gathered peacefully in the city's Mohammad V Square to honor the 33 people killed in the attacks. The participants rejected any demands for retribution and instead called for tolerance, unity, and peace. Among those, making an impassioned plea for social harmony was Souad Khammal, president of the May 16, Victim's Association, who lost her husband and son in the attack. Khammal thanked Morocco's King Mohammed VI and the people of Morocco for their support of the families of the victims.

¶4. (U) Echoing these appeals for peace was Abdellah Baha, assistant secretary general of Morocco's moderate Islamic party, the Justice and Development Party (PJD). The PJD, widely criticized after the bombings because of Islamic ties, called on all sectors, public and private, to remain "united against terrorism." Speaking out as well was the Party for Socialist Progress (PPS), who reminded the GOM that it must remain vigilant in its fight against terrorism while keeping a close eye on the problems faced by youth in Morocco's slums and rural areas.

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Comment  
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¶5. (SBU) Casablanca has shown great resiliency since the May 2003 attacks and areas like Sidi Mouman, home to the majority of the suicide bombers, are now a showplace of new constructions and progress. However, other poor neighborhoods here show signs of the same sense of dissatisfaction and social exclusion, brought on by poverty and unemployment that fostered the fertile breeding ground for extremist influence, which enabled the planners to find

willing participants. Many locals perceive that in some areas of Casablanca conservatism is sharply on the rise, and there is concern that the GOM's current efforts to limit extremist influence may not succeed.

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